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RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1571
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5055
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8653
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6222
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4075
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2040
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000795

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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SUBJECT: UK AMBASSADOR ADVOCATES CONTINUED UN AND GAMBARI
ENGAGEMENT IN BURMA

Classified By: DCM Tom Vajda for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

UK,s View: Gambari Better than a Vacuum

¶1. (C) In an October 8 call on Charge, British Ambassador Mark Canning expressed the UK,s view that UN Special Representative for Burma Gambari should be allowed to continue in his current role as a preferred alternative to &six months of drift8 in the UN good offices mission. Canning said the UK shares the negative U.S. assessment of Gambari, particularly his penchant to hype the positive and focus on tertiary issues, and also recognizes the problems Gambari,s endless optimism creates when the Chinese and others latch onto his upbeat language. Nevertheless, the UK prefers that Gambari conclude his current contract through December and allow a &managed transition8 to his replacement. A breakdown or lengthy gap in the good offices mission would be particularly unfortunate in the coming months, Canning added, since the GOB is expected to make a number of decisions, including promulgating necessary laws, related to the 2010 parliamentary elections. In effect, Canning proposed, Gambari is better than nothing. Canning indicated that the UK has shared its views regarding Gambari with the SYG.

Possible Indonesian Successor

¶2. (C) According to Canning, SYG Ban indicated to the UK a couple of weeks ago that he is considering asking an Indonesian to serve as the next Special Representative. Canning cited two possibilities: former Foreign Minister Alatas and Agus Widjojo.

Prepping for a Possible Ban Visit

¶3. (C) Canning noted that he was aware there has been considerable discussion in Washington about Gambari,s future. He said the UK understands the U.S. has come down favoring Gambari,s termination and asked the Charge for details. Charge reported in broad terms the U.S. perspective about Gambari, as well as U.S. views on a possible visit to Burma by SYG Ban. Canning stressed that the UK is on the same page as the U.S. on a Ban visit, agreeing on the need

for deliverables in advance. In Canning's view, the focus should be on the release of political prisoners, a concrete and verifiable step the regime could undertake in the near term and one consistent with the October 2007 UNSC Presidential Statement. The UK recognizes Gambari cannot be counted on to secure the necessary GOB commitment, however, and believes the SYG should send a sherpa) perhaps his chief of staff) to come to Burma alone or with Gambari to get the job done.

¶4. (C) In a separate meeting October 8, Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister Kyaw Thu told Charge that Foreign Minister Nyan Win had met with both Gambari and Ban during UNGA in New York. Kyaw Thu said he had not received a detailed readout, but said Ban is considering visiting Burma either before or after the ASEAN Summit in Bangkok in December. Kyaw Thu confirmed Gambari has requested to visit Burma before that time.

Comment

¶5. (C) The UK Ambassador called on the Charge on his own (not on instructions) based on Foreign Office reporting he'd seen of the U.S. decision on Gambari (as described in reftel). Canning's intent was to exchange views and get a better sense of the U.S. position, recognizing, as did we, that policy coordination is taking place elsewhere. Canning is among the more astute observers of the local scene here, and is of the view that the GOB is not completely immune to international perceptions and pressure. He cited two recent

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examples: the GOB's release of a handful of prominent political prisoners on the eve of UNGA, and its scramble to set up a meeting between Gambari and Prime Minister Thein Sein during Gambari's last visit once it became apparent Aung San Suu Kyi would not meet with him. From Canning's perspective, a Ban visit, under the right circumstances, ratchets up the pressure on the regime. He believes even such a planned visit's cancellation, if the GOB reneges on its end of the bargain, would serve a useful tactical purpose in the UN context.

DINGER